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Curriculum minutes 02/11/2004

Curriculum Committee

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University of Minnesota, Morris
Morris, MN

MINUTES 2003-2004 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING # 9

February 11, 2004, 8:00 a.m. Behmler Conference Room

Present: John Schwaller, Mike Korth, Jooinn Lee, Mary Elizabeth Bezanson, Chris DeVries, Tom Johnson, Dave Roberts, Jackie Thorvaldson, Ruth Thielke, Dorothy DeJager, Nancy Helsper, and Tammy Faux.

Absent: Judy Kuechle, Jenny Nellis, Laura Burbank, Danielle Thibido, Joe Veilleux, Jeri Mullin, Tom McRoberts, and Matt Conner.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Schwaller asked for approval of minutes from January 14, 2004.

MOTION: (Bezanson, Korth) To approve the minutes for January 14, 2004.

Discussion: Tom Johnson asked if he could e-mail some clarifications on wording. The committee agreed and the motion to approve the minutes was withdrawn.

EDP Subcommittee:

Schwaller called for volunteers for the EDP subcommittee. Dave Roberts and Jackie Thorvaldson volunteered and Schwaller nominated Jenny Nellis as chair.

NSSE Survey discussion:

Bezanson handed out copies of the NSSE conclusion slides that she received from Nancy Helsper. Schwaller explained he was attending a meeting in Washington DC when CC was supposed to meet last and one of the panel discussions he attended was "Working Toward a Shared Vision of Liberal Arts Education: Adding Value Through Student Engagement" by George Kuh the founder of NSSE. The presentation was on DEEP, Documenting Effective Educational Practice. Twenty schools were selected that were particularly exemplary: that had higher than predicted graduation rates and higher than predicted scores on the NSSE benchmarks. These schools were chosen for more in-depth study to see what was going on there. The schools we would be most interested in would be Macalester, The Evergreen State College, and the U of Maine, Farmington, the last two of which are COPLAC schools.

Schwaller handed out a synthesis of the presentation. He explained that some had expanded descriptions and the one of particular interest is # 1 of Communication, ability of written and oral communication.

Features of Liberal Education at DEEP Schools (NSSE)

- Writing intensive (writing across the curriculum)
- Peer teachers and mentors
- Practical applications of learning
- "Seminarizing" - students are equal participants in classroom dialogue
- Common academic and intellectual experiences
- Emphasis on social responsibility
- Socialization to liberal education
- Celebrations of scholarship

Practical applications such as the 8 abilities of Alverno College:

1. Communicate (in writing and in speech)
2. Analyze situations
3. Solve problems
4. Apply values consistently
5. Interact with others effectively
6. Act responsibly in the global environment
7. Fulfill the obligations of citizenship
8. Engage in artistic experiences

Traits common to DEEP schools:

- Mission guides actions (Philosophy and values are the compass and conscience)
- Improvement oriented ethos
- Leadership
- Collaborative ethic
- Data guides improvement

The committee discussed these findings and Schwaller noted that in the DEEP study the findings overlap with what we are beginning to see. We need to consciously look at how to improve what we are doing. This goes along with the “Mission guides action (Philosophy and values are the compass and conscience)”

Helsper stated it is also interesting that after three years of reviewing Gen Ed Surveys the Assessment Committee recommended that the Campus do a better job explaining to students the importance of the gen ed requirements, which goes along with the idea of socialization to liberal education.

A member stated that the problem with communication is that it doesn't matter as much what you say but it matters more what the students hear. Another member noted that in working with his students he finds that they listen most to their peers.

The committee also discussed the diversity issue. A member stated that students don't equate diversity as part of the liberal arts education but as an issue. Another member was troubled by the results on slide #54 on the NSSE power point presentation comparing seniors to freshman in the percent of students who said understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds is moderately or very important. Seniors scored lower than freshman. A member stated that this showed we are not communicating enough. Schwaller explained that after attending this meeting it reinforced for him the need to more fully study the writing issue. A member also stated that if we work on the writing issue the others would also change.

The committee discussed “seminaring” and peer teaching and mentoring. Schwaller read Evergreen's definition of “seminaring” “faculty teach students how to seminar. Students are expected to be equal participants in classroom dialogue. Thus, they must prepare for class, formulating questions and applications for the topic at hand.” Schwaller explained that here at UMM we see this as the same as peer teaching and mentors.

Schwaller explained that of the DEEP characteristics, the principal problem for UMM is writing and then socializing. A member asked that now that we know our failures and success how do we make sure the data reflect what we know to be true and what we do? Schwaller explained that we cannot rely solely on the NSSE results and that it will be difficult for this large of a group to move forward. He suggested forming a sub-committee to look at the issue and make recommendations to the committee.

Helsper notified the committee that UMM will be doing NSSE again this spring and it will be interesting to see the results from a different group of students. These results will be available Fall of 2004.

Mary Elizabeth Bezanson, Tom Johnson, and Dorothy DeJager volunteered to be on the sub-committee and Schwaller indicated he would like Jenny Nellis, one member from each division and a MCSA representative. Schwaller asked Mike Korth to choose someone from his area and he will ask Judy Kuechle to do the same. The sub-committee will also include someone from the English discipline.

Schwaller will prepare the charge for the sub-committee, which will include exploring the problems and pointing the curriculum committee in the right direction with recommendations.

Meeting adjourned.
9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Van Horn